

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as currently amended and in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-28 are currently active in this case. Claims 1, 7, 18, and 24 have been amended by the current amendment. No new matter has been added. See the Specification at page 18, lines 18 – 23 and page 19, lines 15-20.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-12 and 18-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by Japanese Published Patent Application No. 2002-182470 to Umezawa et al.

Briefly recapitulating, the present invention (Claim 1) is directed to a developing device including a developing roller and a toner layer regulating roller arranged in contact with the developing roller and configured not to rotate with the developing roller during an image forming operation and to freely rotate with the developing roller during a non-image forming operation. The developing device includes a mechanism configured to determine whether the developing device is new or unused for a period longer than a predetermined time (hereinafter referred to as “the device checking mechanism feature”). The device checking mechanism also enables prevention of an overcurrent flow to a drive motor of the developing roller 20 and a failure of the drive motor. See the Specification at page 22 line 25 – page 23 line 5.

Claim 7 recites the same point of novelty as Claim 1; however, Claim 7 has been written to invoke 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph. Claim 18 is directed to a process cartridge including the device checking mechanism feature of the present invention. Lastly, Claim 24 is also directed to a process cartridge; however, Claim 24 has been written to invoke 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph.

The Umezawa et al. publication discloses a toner regulating roller 14 arranged in contact with the developing roller to regulate toner held on the developing roller. However, Umezawa et al. do not teach or suggest the device checking mechanism feature of the present invention. Consequently, the Umezawa et al. publication is not believed to anticipate or render obvious the subject matter recited by independent Claims 1, 7, 18, and 24. Dependent Claims 2-6, 8-17, 19-23, and 25-29 are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons that their respective independent claims are believed to be allowable.

Consequently, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and an early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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